

A note on the gender of the genus *Podarcis* (Sauria: Lacertidae)

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According to article 34 b of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN) species (and subspecies) names “must agree in gender with the generic name with which it is at any time combined; if the termination is incorrect it must be changed accordingly” (ICZN 1985). This article has quite often been neglected in the taxonomic/nomenclatural practice. Some popular herpetological examples of recent corrections of a long-term wrong usage are *Uromastyx* (feminine; Agamidae: Lanza 1983), *Adelphicos* (neuter; Colubridae: LaDuc 1995) or *Scinax* (masculine; Hylidae: Köhler & Böhme 1996).

Arnold (1973) reinstated the generic name *Podarcis* Wagler, 1830 as a full genus and referred to Fitzinger (1843) as the first author who fixed a type (cited in the original combination: *Seps muralis* Laurenti, 1768). The species concerned had mostly been mostly regarded as a sub-genus of *Lacerta* before (for a detailed discussion see Böhme 1986). In his original description, Wagler (1830) assigned three species to his new genus *Podarcis*, viz. “*Seps muralis* Laur.” (= *Podarcis muralis*), “*Lacerta velox* Pall.” (= *Eremias velox*) and “*Lacerta grammica* Lichtenst.” (= *Eremias grammica*). It was Fitzinger (1843) who subsequently selected and designated *Seps muralis* Laurenti (being likewise of masculine gender!) as the type species of *Podarcis* (see also Loveridge 1957, Arnold 1973).

When Arnold (1973), elevated *Podarcis* to full generic rank again, he did not refer to its gender and consequently left the terminations of the species names (which had been adapted to the feminine gender of their former genus *Lacerta* before) unchanged. The Greek word “podarkis” is an adjective meaning “swift-footed, nimble”. In his original description, Wagler (1830) used the Latin translation “pedibus celer” to give the etymology of *Podarcis*. As he generally did not combine his new generic names with a specific type species, but rather cited the assigned species in their original combinations (e.g. *Seps muralis*, see above), he never made decisions as to the gender of his new generic names. This is also true for *Podarcis*, a word derived from a Greek adjective. However, according to article 11 g of the Code (ICZN 1985) “a genus-group name must be or be treated as a noun in the nominative singular”, “podarkis” in his latinized spelling *Podarcis* has to be treated as a noun of masculine gender for the following reasons:

— Wagler was surely aware of “podarkis” being an adjective particularly attributed to the ancient hero Achilles in the classic Greek (Homerian) literature, i.e. a clearly masculine attribution! The three species assigned by him (1830) to his new genus name were (1) *Seps muralis* (*muralis* here being masculine, too, because of the gender of *Seps*!), (2) *Lacerta velox*, and (3) *Lacerta grammica* (*velox* and *grammica* being feminine due to their combination with *Lacerta*). Wagler, therefore, did not make a formal decision as to the gender of *Podarcis*, but by no means considered this name to be feminine!

— Fitzinger (1843) was the first to subsequently and explicitly select a type for *Podarcis*, viz. *Seps muralis*, which was the masculine one out of Wagler’s three names. His treatment has to be accepted as the establishment of gender.

The consequence of accepting *Podarcis* as masculine requires to change the endings of those species of *Podarcis* that have a specific feminine termination. These are: *Podarcis hispanica* (to *P. hispanicus*), *P. peloponnesiaca* (to *P. peloponnesiacus*), *P. sicula* (to *P. siculus*), *P. taurica* (to *P. tauricus*), and *P. wagleriana* (to *P. waglerianus*). In the case of *P. tiliguerta*, however, the situation is different, as *tiliguerta* is not an adjective but an old-Sardinian noun meaning lizard (Corti, pers. comm.). Therefore, this termination is not affected by the gender of the genus name. Of the remaining species of *Podarcis*, of course all feminine subspecific endings

have to be changed accordingly. *P. (Teira) perspicillata* is not affected by this change, as it has recently been transferred to a full genus *Teira* by Mayer & Bischoff (1996), thus remaining feminine in gender. The elevation of another subgenus of *Lacerta*, viz. *Timon* Tschudi, to full generic rank (Mayer & Bischoff 1996) also causes the change from *L. lepida* to *T. lepidus*.

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